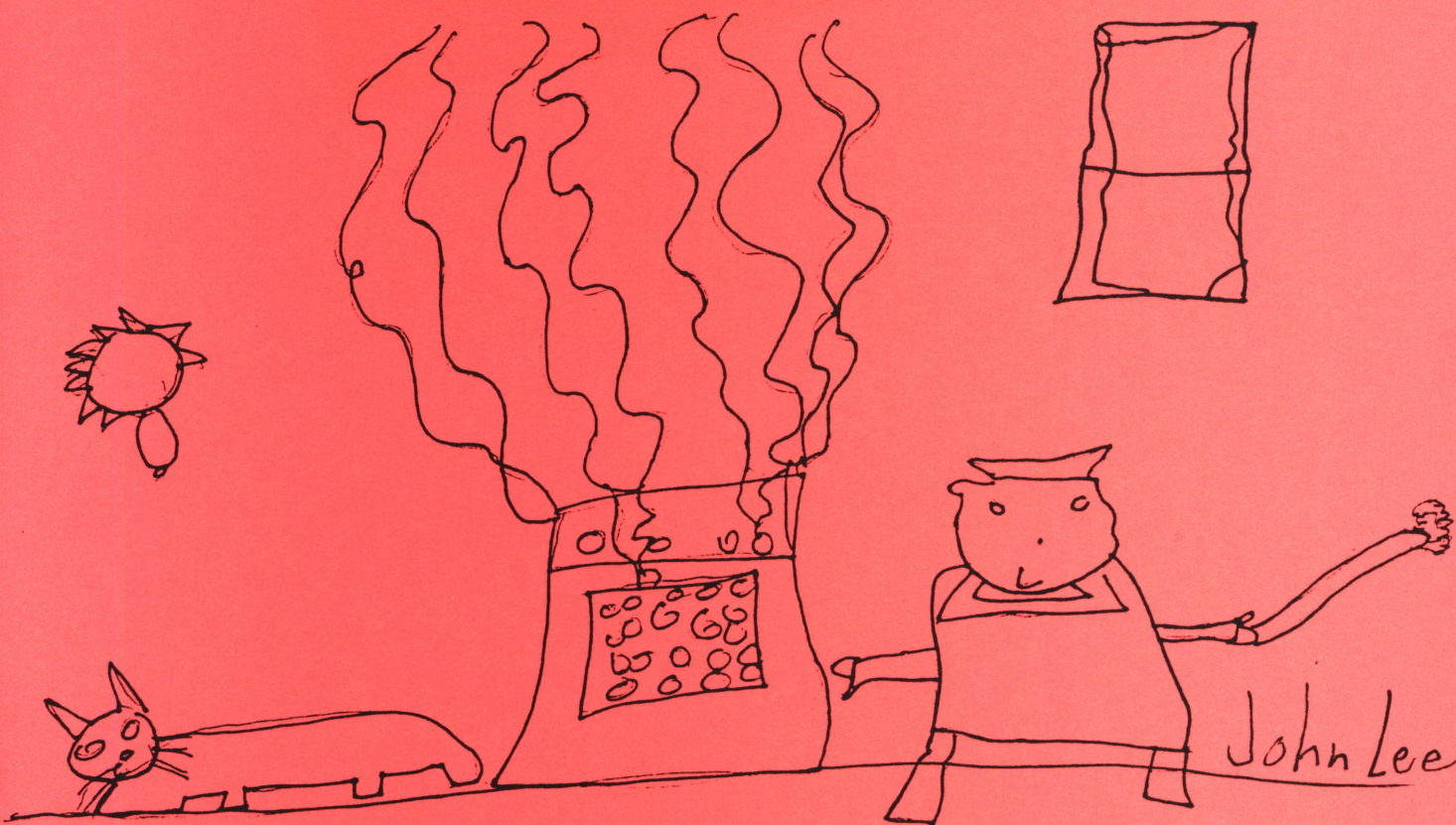
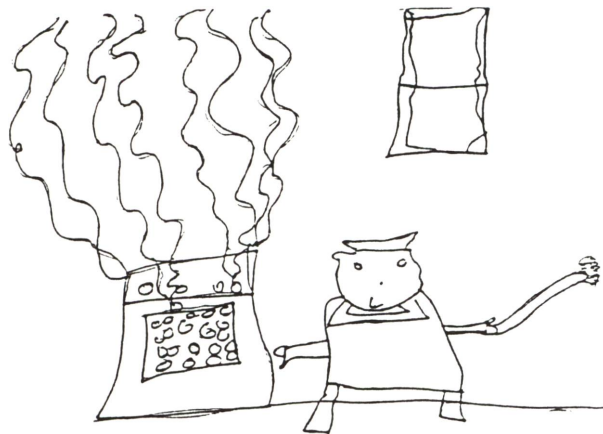


LIFE'S FABLES
OR
DON'T LEAVE CATS IN THE
OVEN
WHEN YOU KNOW
YOUR MAMA'S COMIN'
HOME
FROM WORK



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INTERMEDIATE WEST STUDENTS
STARMS DISCOVERY LEARNING CENTER
1996

FORWARD

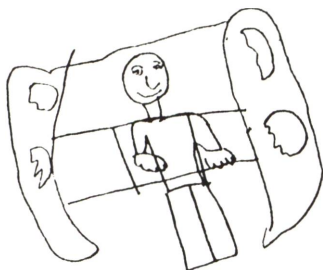
I got the idea at the beach. This coming school year my students would do a book of creative writing based on their reactions to the bombing of Hiroshima. It was the anniversary of the bombings so it would be topical and I would get a chance to try out a peace curriculum I'd long wanted to implement. I did research, adapted articles and armed with these, approached my new class (in my new school) with high hopes. After a month I just couldn't get started. Something felt wrong.

We had been reading fables in class and one night I read a fable penned by a student of mine, Justin Holley. It was a simple little story with a heavy little moral: "Take time to listen on the streets." All of a sudden it hit me. I hadn't been listening. I'd come up with an idea for a book which not only had nothing to do with my students' prior knowledge, but had decided on a course of direction without listening to where my students might want to go. A book of fables taken from lessons they'd learned would be accessible to any of them. We learn lessons every day of our lives. And who to better teach us a lesson than a child? Once I gave up the reins and let their writings direct us, the project took off like gang busters.

I enlisted the aid of my fellow teacher and friend, Dot Lauer's class of primary students to act as illustrators. Each week as my students finished a fable they marched down to Dot's class and read their work to her kids who then "drew the picture." We saw the benefits as two-fold. First, my students got experience at reading in front of an audience and secondly, Dot's class learned to illustrate a story by drawing a picture of what they perceived of as the main idea.

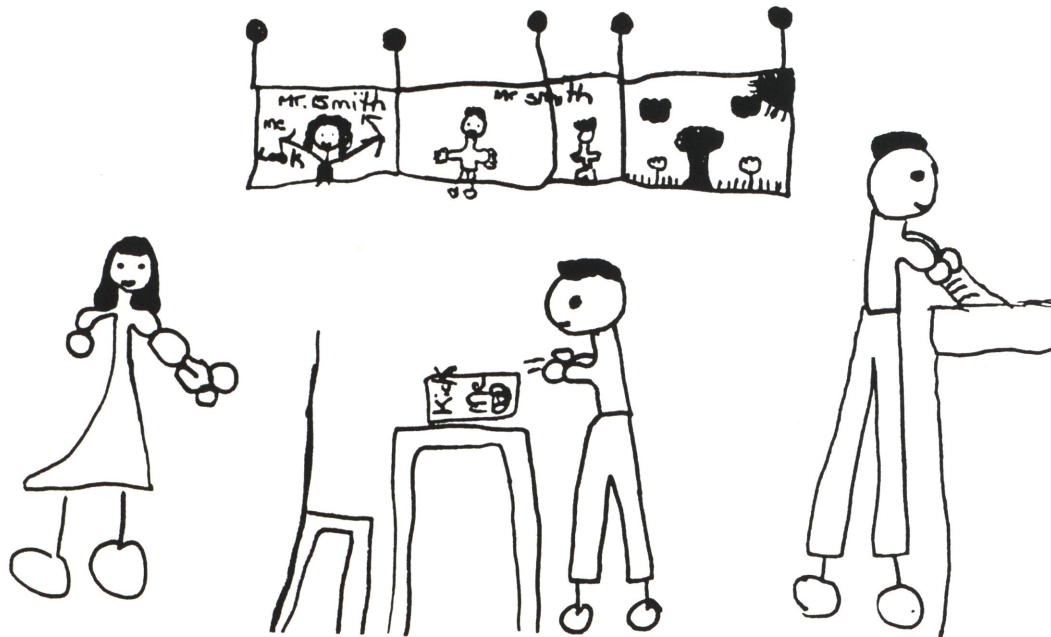
One day a student from Dot's class came to our room. He was wiggling like a puppy and grinning from ear to ear. He had something to share with us. It was a fable. He got a good reaction from his audience and went to tell his classmates about it. Suddenly fable fever had taken off among the primary students. They were writing like mad and chomping at the bit to get down to my room to share their latest efforts. Something was happening that neither Dot nor I had anticipated. Her kids were becoming writers and proud of it.

It is not unusual these days for there to be a knock at my door and a primary student enter with fable in hand to share with my class. And the look on their faces when they leave and the careful way in which they hold their creations is beyond description. The writer Henry Roth is quoted as saying, "Exercising creativity helps us preserve one of our proudest, most noble, most precious possessions: dignity." One look at the faces of these young writers and you know he's right. As a wise person once wrote, "Take time to listen on the streets." You just might learn a lesson. I did.



Doug Smith
Intermediate West
Starms Discovery Learning Center

SCHOOL DAZE



“Bad and Badder”

One ugly day Freddie Johnson was up in his classroom. “Okay today we will work on Math for subject time,” said his teacher Mrs. Cobra grabbing her chalk.

“Yes! I love Math, it’s so easy to do,” said Freddie with his knee up. After school he saw his best friend Eric.

“Hello Eric, guess what. My mom says that I could come do my homework over at your house today,” said Freddie with a happy face.

“Cool, I have this new arcade game too called Mortal Kombat 3 and the graphics on it are pretty cool so we can do that afterwards. Oh no, we have spelling homework. I hate spelling! It’s the hardest thing in the fifth grade,” said Freddie madly. Little did this wicked little boy know his best friend was badder than him.

“I don’t know none of these but one. I wish there wasn’t such a thing as spelling because this is not my kind of thing.”

The next day the teacher checked the papers and she called the names out. Her last names to call were Eric and Freddie. “Freddie, you have one right and Eric you have zero right,” said the teacher slowly. “I have a name for you guys: Bad and Badder.” Freddie was Bad and Eric was Badder.

“Um, I feel good because he didn’t get one right,” said Freddie feeling tall.

Moral: When you’re feeling bad it makes you feel better to see someone worse off than you.

-TERREAL EDWARD CARMICHAEL

